



October 15, 2012

Letter to the Editor  
The Orange County Register  
625 North Grand Avenue  
Santa Ana, CA 92705

**Subject: I-405 Improvement Project**

Seven years ago, the Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Board of Directors reviewed several alternatives for widening the I-405 Freeway and selected an alternative that added general purpose lanes to the I-405 Freeway with minimum right-of-way impacts, while rejecting a toll-lane concept among others. Six years ago, the Orange County voters approved the Renewed Measure M (Measure M2) tax initiative that included the widening proposal for the I-405 Freeway without any consideration of toll lanes. The OCTA Board is now considering the following three (3) alternatives for the widening of the I-405 Freeway:

- Alternative 1 – Adds one (1) general purpose lane in each direction between Euclid Street and the I-605 Freeway;
- Alternative 2 – Adds two (2) general purpose lanes in each direction between Euclid Street and the I-605 Freeway;
- Alternative 3 – Adds one (1) general purpose lane in each direction between Euclid Street and the I-605 Freeway; adds one (1) toll lane between the SR-73 Freeway and the I-605 Freeway with a direct carpool lane to toll lane connector between the SR-73 Freeway and the I-405 Freeway, and converts the existing carpool lane between the SR-73 Freeway and the I-605 Freeway to a toll lane.

At the OCTA Board meeting on September 24, 2012, several Board members ignored the history and promises made to the Orange County voters during the Measure M2 renewal, and were inclined to support Alternative 3 against the wishes of the local I-405 Corridor Cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, Huntington Beach, Los Alamitos, Seal Beach, and Westminster, who unanimously support Revised Alternative 2. These cities, through a number of letters and presentations, have communicated their position and preferences to the OCTA Board of Directors. The corridor cities believe that Revised Alternative 2 is superior to Alternatives 1 and 3, due to the following reasons:

- Alternative 3 is not legal. Alternative 3 uses Measure M2 tax revenues to facilitate construction of toll lanes on a public facility, the I-405 Freeway. The true cost of adding toll lanes is not included in the financing models prepared for this project, as it did not include the right-of-way cost, the share of cost for widening bridges, and the freeway footprint.
- There was no mention of "toll" lanes in the M2 Ordinance that was approved by the voters. As evidenced by the initial polling on M2, Orange County voters would not have approved



toll lanes. If Alternative 3 is approved, the traditional carpool lanes on the I-405 will cease to exist. Under Alternative 3, vehicles with two (2) passengers (current High Occupancy Vehicle lane users) will be required to pay a toll to ride in the "toll" lanes.

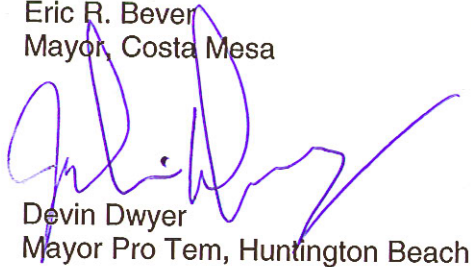
- Alternative 3 does not provide additional capacity for the vast majority of freeway users. The additional lanes that are proposed to be added with Alternative 3 will only benefit a minority of toll-road users.
- Alternative 3 severely restricts access to local communities. Alternative 3 will result in significant additional congestion as vehicles weave in and out of the limited number of entry and exit points that serve multiple jurisdictions and exit ramps.
- While Alternative 1 results in five (5) general purpose lanes north of Euclid Street, it will not match the existing six-lane cross-section south of Euclid Street, particularly in the northbound direction. If Alternative 1 is chosen, we will continue to have bottlenecked traffic.
- Alternative 2 costs approximately \$100 million more than Alternative 1 and represents the most cost-effective solution to the I-405 corridor. The original cost estimate for Alternative 2, \$1.4 billion, can be reduced by \$100 million with design changes proposed by OCTA staff in the Fountain Valley area and OCTA Director/Supervisor John Moorlach in the Seal Beach area. Thus, Alternative 2 is a feasible option as it fits within the available funding for the project.
- Alternative 2 will not rule out the ability to transition to toll lanes in the future. Alternative 2 provides immediate relief and improved mobility to all I-405 users.

The Mayors of the Corridor Cities have jointly requested the OCTA Board to approve Revised Alternative 2 as the "locally preferred alternative" for the I-405 Improvement Project. Any other approach betrays the years-long public process which early on rejected the idea of tolling, betrays the will of the Measure M2 voters, betrays the promises made by OCTA to use the Measure M2 taxes to help alleviate freeway congestion, and betrays the taxpayers with double taxation by requiring them to pay again to use the facilities their tax dollars built. We know that OCTA can build a project that upholds all the promises and serves the greater good, and that project is Alternative 2.

Sincerely,



Eric R. Bever  
Mayor, Costa Mesa



Devin Dwyer  
Mayor Pro Tem, Huntington Beach



Michael Levitt  
Mayor, Seal Beach



John Collins  
Mayor, Fountain Valley



Troy D. Edgar  
Mayor, Los Alamitos



Margie L. Rice  
Mayor, Westminster